

**BOARD OF REGISTERED NURSING**

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## **ABANDONMENT OF PATIENTS**

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Inquiries have been received by the Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) regarding which actions by a nurse constitute patient abandonment and thus may lead to discipline against a nurse's license.

For patient abandonment to occur, the nurse must:

- a) Have first **accepted** the patient assignment, thus establishing a nurse-patient relationship, and then
- b) **Severed** that nurse-patient relationship without giving reasonable notice to the appropriate person (e.g., supervisor, patient) so that arrangements can be made for continuation of nursing care by others.

A nurse-patient relationship begins when responsibility for nursing care of a patient is accepted by the nurse.

Refusal to accept an assignment or a nurse-patient relationship is not considered patient abandonment by the BRN. Failure to notify the employing agency that the nurse will not appear to work an assigned shift, and refusal to work additional hours or shifts would also not be considered patient abandonment by the BRN. Once the nurse has accepted responsibility for nursing care of a patient, severing of the nurse-patient relationship may lead to discipline of a nurse's license.

The RN who follows the above BRN advisory statement will not be considered to have abandoned the patient for purposes of Board disciplinary action. However, it should be noted that the BRN has no jurisdiction over employment and contract issues.